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REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

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Increase In Unsuitability Discharges
Of Marine Corps Recruits
Requires Improved
Planning And Administration B-164088

Department of the Navy

*BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES*

FEB. 15, 1972

FEB. 15, 1972

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-164088

C1, To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This is our report on the increase in unsuitability^B discharges of Marine Corps recruits.

Our review was made pursuant to the Budget and Accounting Act, 1921 (31 U.S.C. 53), and the Accounting and Auditing Act of 1950 (31 U.S.C. 67).

Copies of this report are being sent to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretary of the Navy; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

James P. Abate

Comptroller General
of the United States

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFQT	Armed Forces Qualification Test
DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
WRAT	Wide Range Achievement Test

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

For about 12 years prior to fiscal year 1970, from 1 percent to 4 percent ⁹⁸ of the men entering the Marine Corps received unsuitability discharges before completing recruit (initial) training. During fiscal year 1970 the discharge rate began to rise sharply and averaged more than 20 percent during the second half of the year.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) made a review to determine

- why the discharge rate had increased,
- what steps had been taken by the corps to reduce the discharge rate to traditional levels, and
- whether additional measures could be taken to reduce the rate.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Marine Corps discharged, for reasons of unsuitability, about 22 percent--over 11,100--of the male recruits who enlisted in the corps between December 1969 and September 1970. This discharge rate was more than five times greater than the rate experienced during the previous 12 years. The corps is continuing to experience an abnormally high unsuitability-discharge rate.

Over \$15.3 million was spent to recruit, train, and return home these 11,100 men, an expenditure from which the Government received little benefit. (See p. 7.)

The increase in unsuitability discharges began after the corps embarked on its Professionalism Program designed to increase the professionalism of the corps to that of the pre-Vietnam level. This program was to be accomplished, in part, by enlisting in the corps only those men who met the highest standards and by tightening the requirements for successful completion of recruit training. (See p. 7.)

The unsuitability-discharge rate increased because:

- A study was not made to determine the best time and manner to carry out the Professionalism Program at recruiting and training activities. (See p. 18.)

FEB. 15, 1972

--Formal guidance was not provided to recruiting and training activities describing how they should implement the program. Consequently, without coordinating their efforts, recruiting and training personnel applied existing standards on a basis of individual judgment. This led to an abnormally high number of recruits' being enlisted in the corps who were, as shown above, unsuitable. (See p. 18.)

Although the corps has initiated a number of actions to reduce the unsuitability-discharge rate, the rate is still abnormally high. As to those earlier actions whose effect can be evaluated, it appears that they have done little to reduce the rate. As to the more recent actions, it is too early to determine whether they will affect the rate. (See p. 18.)

RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

In view of the Marine Corps' experience with the Professionalism Program, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, before initiating similar major programs, should ensure that the necessary advance planning has been carried out. This planning should include coordination among participating groups and the preparation and dissemination to those groups of guidance needed to effectively carry out the programs. (See p. 18.)

The Commandant should take steps to make this report available to all management levels in the corps, to illustrate the adverse effects that can result from initiating major programs (1) without effective advance planning and coordination among participating organizations and (2) without providing adequate implementing guidelines to the organizations responsible for carrying out the programs. (See p. 19.)

Also, if the more recent actions taken by the Marine Corps do not reduce materially the unsuitability-discharge rate, the Secretary of the Navy should direct the Commandant to:

--Perform an in-depth review of the policies, procedures, and practices employed by corps' recruiting personnel to determine whether such personnel are making acceptable efforts to enlist high-quality recruits. (See p. 19.)

--Initiate a study to determine whether it would be desirable and practicable to develop means of reducing the amount of subjectivity used by personnel at recruit depots in applying training standards. (See p. 19.)

--Develop a plan to implement the recommendations made as a result of the above actions. (See p. 19.)

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The Department of Defense (DOD) stated that the findings in this report were correct and that GAO's recommendations were concurred with in principle and could be accomplished through normal operating procedures

DOD stated also that the purpose of the Marine Corps in instituting the Professionalism Program continued to be valid and that DOD expected that the corps' current efforts would reduce recruit attrition to an acceptable level by the end of 1971. If these efforts do not produce the required results, the corps intends to reexamine the program in depth. (See p. 20.)

The DOD comments are responsive to the recommendations in this report. GAO plans to consider at a later date the effectiveness of the actions taken by the Marine Corps to reduce the recruit unsuitability-discharge rate to an acceptable level.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

In obtaining suitable manpower, military organizations must exercise greater care to eliminate wasteful recruiting and training.

INTRODUCTION

The Marine Corps has more than 600 recruiting activities located throughout the United States. In fiscal year 1970 the recruiters enlisted about 67,700 men into the corps at a cost in excess of \$21 million. During the period September 1969 through February 1970, the corps obtained about 7,900 men through the Selective Service System. Since the corps does not normally rely on the Selective Service System to meet its manpower needs (no marines have been obtained through the System since February 1970, and the corps has no current plans to use the System in the foreseeable future), we limited our review to the recruiting and training of marines acquired through the corps' recruiting activities.

At a recruiting activity an applicant undergoes pre-enlistment processing to determine whether he generally meets the corps' enlistment standards. During this processing the applicant receives preliminary screening and a background investigation. If he satisfactorily completes this initial processing, the applicant is sent to an Armed Forces Examination and Entrance Station for mental and physical testing. Upon satisfactory completion of this testing, he is sworn into the corps and sent to a Marine Corps Recruit Depot either at Parris Island, South Carolina, or at San Diego, California, to begin 9 weeks of recruit training. This training is designed to prepare the recruit for early adjustment to military life by providing him with skill and knowledge in basic military subjects.

A recruit who experiences difficulty in meeting the training requirements can be given remedial training either (1) by being given intensive instructions at the depot's Special Training Branch in such subjects as motivation and physical conditioning, or (2) by being transferred (recycled) to another platoon of recruits in an earlier phase of training with the expectation that, by repeating the training that he was given previously, he will improve his performance. If a recruit is unable to meet the training standards after remedial training, a recommendation is made, usually by his battalion commander, to the Depot Aptitude

Board that he be discharged for reasons of unsuitability.¹
The Board conducts a hearing on the case and submits its
recommendation to the depot Commanding General for final
decision.

¹An unsuitability discharge is given for such reasons as
inaptitude, illiteracy, character and behavior disorders,
and apathy.

CHAPTER 2

UNSUITABILITY DISCHARGES

OF MALE MARINE RECRUITS

The Marine Corps discharged, for reasons of unsuitability, about 22 percent (over 11,100) of the male recruits who enlisted in the service between December 1969 and September 1970. The corps provided us with data showing that over \$15.3 million was spent to recruit, train, and return home these 11,100 men. These costs represented a substantial expenditure from which the Government received little benefit. The 22-percent discharge rate was over five times greater than the rate experienced during any of the preceding 12 fiscal years. Moreover, although the discharge rate showed a moderate decline in fiscal year 1971, it continued at an abnormally high level.

PROFESSIONALISM PROGRAM

In December 1969 the Marine Corps embarked on a Professionalism Program aimed toward increasing the professionalism of the corps to that of the pre-Vietnam level. In announcing the program, the Commandant of the Marine Corps stated that, as the size of the corps decreased to its 1965 manpower level, the corps should strive to attain during 1970 the same level of proficiency that existed in 1965.

It was the Commandant's intention that, under the program, only those men who met the "highest standards" be permitted to enlist in the corps. Further the Commanding Generals of the two Marine Corps recruit depots were directed to tighten requirements for successful completion of recruit training and to reduce the amount of time spent on recruits who were having difficulty completing training. The recruit depots were directed to reduce from two to one the number of times a recruit could be recycled or could be assigned to the Special Training Branch.

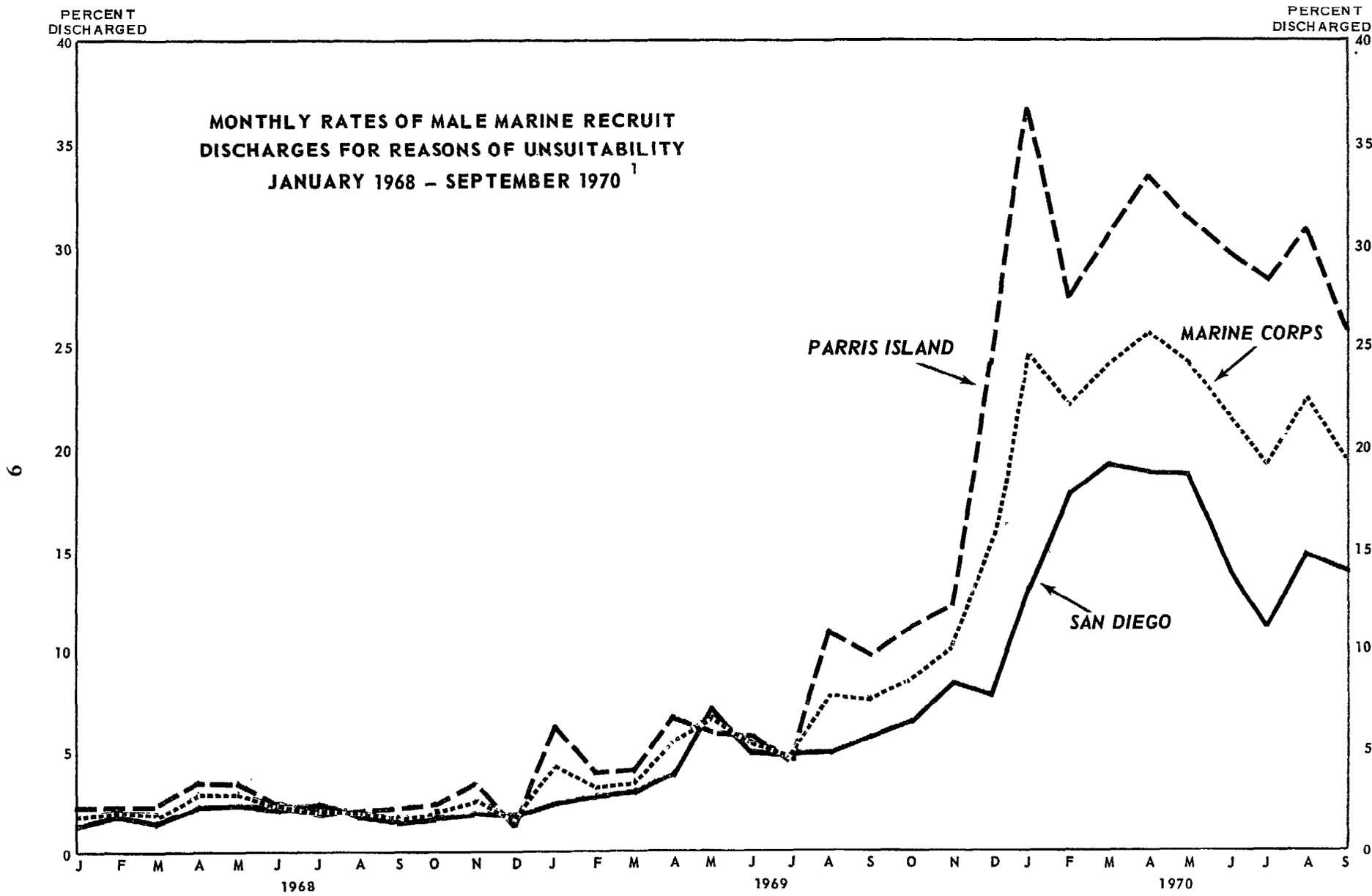
RAPID INCREASE IN DISCHARGES
FROM RECRUIT TRAINING

Since fiscal year 1958, from 1 percent to 4 percent of all men enlisting in the corp have been discharged annually during recruit training for reasons of unsuitability. After the Professionalism Program began, there was a marked increase in this discharge rate which reached a high of more than 25 percent in April 1970. During the first 10 months of the program--December 1969 through September 1970--more than 11,100 of the 51,700 recruits who began training received unsuitability discharges, a discharge rate of about 22 percent¹. The Marine Corps provided us with data showing that over \$15.3 million² was spent recruiting, training, and returning home the 11,100 recruits who received unsuitability discharges. The chart on the following page shows the percent of recruits who received discharges for reasons of unsuitability before and during the program.

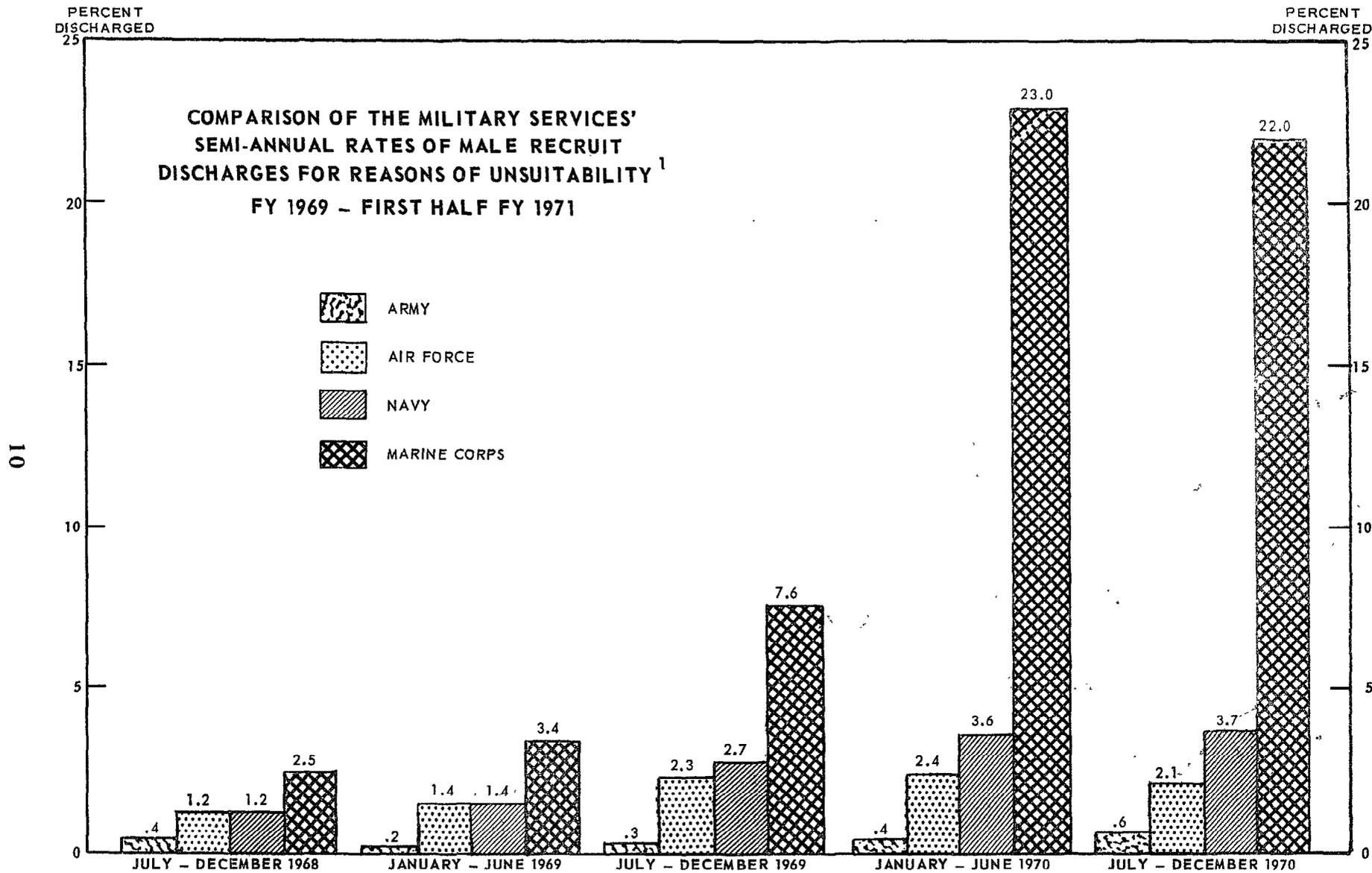
The reduction in the corps' strength that led to initiating the Professionalism Program began when substantial numbers of American troops started to be withdrawn from Vietnam. To determine whether the other military services experienced significant changes in their unsuitability-discharge rates after this force withdrawal started, we obtained from the four services data showing the number of men who entered recruit training and the number who received unsuitability discharges during the five semiannual periods ended December 1970. These data showed that, although the other services had experienced some increase in their discharge rates, these rates still remained well below the Marine Corps' rate. (See chart on p. 10.)

¹Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, reported in June 1971 that the unsuitability discharges for January 1971 enlistees averaged 17 percent.

²These costs include about \$12.2 million from the Military Personnel, Marine Corps appropriation; \$3 million from the Operation and Maintenance, Marine Corps appropriation; and \$0.1 million from various Department of the Navy appropriations.



¹ The discharge rates reflect the percentage of recruits entering training each month who were subsequently discharged at the Marine Corps Recruit Depots.



¹ Discharge rates for Army include both male recruits and draftees.

CHAPTER 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONALISM PROGRAM

Before the Marine Corps initiated its Professionalism Program, no study was made to determine how the program should be carried out at the recruiting activities or training depots. The corps did not consider the effect the program would have on recruit discharges and the costs associated with the discharges. Additionally no specific guidance was provided to the recruiting activities or training depots on how the program should be implemented.

RECRUIT QUALITY

The Commandant directed that, under the program, only those men who met the highest standards were to be enlisted in the corps. Although it was intended that the corps be more selective in its enlistments, no specific guidance was given to recruiters on how this should be accomplished. Recruiters continued to use the same enlistment standards that were in effect before the program began, and there was no improvement in the quality of recruits who entered the corps.

For example, both before and after the program began, all recruits were required to take the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). This test was designed to measure recruits' mental ability. Analysis of AFQT scores shows that there was no improvement in the mental ability of recruits after the program began. Moreover the percent of high school graduates entering the corps actually dropped. During the period July through December 1969, about 57 percent of new recruits were high school graduates; during the comparable period in 1970, about 52 percent were high school graduates.

We interviewed training officials at the two recruit depots, and, almost without exception, it was their opinion that, after the Professionalism Program began, they continued to receive low-quality recruits from the recruiting activities. The training officials provided us with a number of examples

of recruits who, they believed, should not have been permitted to enlist in the corps. Two such examples follow.

Recruit A enlisted in the Marine Corps in Detroit, Michigan, on August 18, 1970. The recruit weighed about 50 pounds more than the maximum weight allowed under the enlistment standards. He was discharged on September 14, 1970, after spending 28 days in the service.

Recruit B entered the Marine Corps in Louisiana on January 12, 1971, under the impression that he was registering with the Selective Service System. He was administered an intelligence test at the recruit depot, which showed that he had a rather severe mental handicap. The recruit was discharged from the corps on February 25, 1971, after spending 45 days in the service.

RECRUIT DEPOTS

In announcing the program, the Commandant directed the recruit depots to "tighten requirements" for the successful completion of recruit training. Other than limiting the number of times a recruit could be sent to the Special Training Branch or could be recycled, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, provided no specific guidance to the recruit depots on how they should tighten requirements for recruit training. (See p. 7.) Corps officials informed us that, in the absence of such guidance, training personnel began applying existing training standards more stringently and subjectively. They informed us also that many of the recruits who were receiving unsuitability discharges would have graduated from recruit training before the program began.

CHAPTER 4

ACTIONS TAKEN TO REDUCE UNSUITABILITY DISCHARGES

The corps has taken several actions to reduce the abnormally high unsuitability-discharge rate. These actions are summarized below together with our related views.

REDUCTION OF MENTAL CATEGORY IV RECRUITS

AFQT scores are used to rank recruits into five mental categories.

	<u>AFQT</u> <u>score range</u>
Mental category I	93 to 100
Mental category II	65 " 92
Mental category III	31 " 64
Mental category IV	10 " 30
Mental category V	0 " 9

Under Project One Hundred Thousand, DOD required that 24 percent of new marine recruits be in mental category IV.¹ After the Professionalism Program began, about one of every two mental category IV recruits entering the corps received an unsuitability discharge. To deal with this problem, the Marine Corps asked DOD to reduce its 24-percent quota. Expecting a favorable response to this request, the corps reduced its mental category IV enlistments to 16 percent. In February 1971 the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) advised the Marine Corps that its quota was being reduced to 20 percent; the Corps is meeting this quota in its present enlistments.

¹Project One Hundred Thousand is discussed in GAO's report entitled "Management of the Project One Hundred Thousand Program" (B-164088, December 8, 1969). Under Project One Hundred Thousand, the services are required to accept men scoring between 10 and 20 on AFQT. These men, previously ineligible for acceptance into service, are referred to as new-standards personnel.

GAO evaluation

In our opinion this action will not materially affect the unsuitability-discharge rate. The reduction of the quota from 24 percent to 20 percent is not a significant change, since one of every five recruits still will be in mental category IV.

Moreover the 4-percent reduction must be offset by enlistment of recruits in the higher three mental categories. Marine Corps statistics indicate that the corps already is recruiting all the mental categories I and II recruits it can obtain. It therefore appears that more recruits in mental category III will have to be accepted. During the first 10 months of the Professionalism Program, this category experienced an unsuitability-discharge rate of nearly 19 percent.

INTRODUCTION OF LITERACY TEST

The corps also initiated a pilot preenlistment reading test--Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)--on October 1, 1970. Recruiters administer WRAT to applicants to determine whether they can read at the fourth-grade level. Applicants who fail to read at this level are not permitted to enlist in the corps.

GAO evaluation

Information made available to us indicated that WRAT was not achieving its intended objective. The officials we interviewed at recruiting activities believed that WRAT was of no value in improving the quality of recruits accepted by the Marine Corps. They pointed out that WRAT required the applicant merely to correctly pronounce words listed on the test sheet, rather than to show his comprehension of the words. These recruiting officials believed also that men who failed WRAT would not have been permitted to enter the corps under other entrance procedures--for example, these men probably would have failed the enlistment-screening test or AFQT.

Officials at the two recruit depots also expressed reservations about the effectiveness of WRAT as a means of

screening illiterates and of improving the quality of recruits. In responding to the Commandant's request for an opinion on the effectiveness of WRAT, the Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, stated that:

"The opinions of personnel directly associated with recruit processing and training indicate there has been no detectable change in the quality of recruits received since the implementation of WRAT."

INCREASING REMEDIAL TRAINING

As previously discussed, when the Professionalism Program began, a restriction was placed on the amount of remedial training recruits could receive. After the program was under way and it became apparent to the corps that something had to be done to try to reduce the number of unsuitability discharges, the restriction on remedial training was relaxed. Recruits were able to be recycled more than once, and they could spend longer periods in the Special Training Branch.

GAO evaluation

Available data do not show that the relaxation of the restriction on remedial training had reduced materially the number of unsuitability discharges. Furthermore training officials at Parris Island told us that this action would only delay the discharge of many recruits and thereby unnecessarily would increase training costs.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

The Marine Corps recently has initiated several additional actions to try to deal with the unsuitability-discharge problem. At the conclusion of our review, it was too early to determine whether these actions would have any appreciable affect on the rate of these discharges. These actions are discussed below.

Neuropsychiatric study

Several months before the Professionalism Program began, the Marine Corps asked that the Navy make a study and develop techniques that could be used in selecting recruits for entry in the corps under Project One Hundred Thousand. The Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit, San Diego, studied this matter and reported its findings to the Marine Corps in December 1970. That report identified various personal characteristics and, by using combinations of these characteristics, predicted the probability that new-standards personnel would be able to perform effectively as Marines. On July 1, 1971, the corps began using the study results to screen new-standards personnel applying for enlistment.

Depots' actions

In February 1971 the Commandant asked for the views of the recruit depots' Commanding Generals on ways to reduce the recruit-discharge rate to about 10 percent. He pointed out that, if the depots did not reduce the discharge rate to 10 percent or less, the corps would be unable to meet its fiscal years' 1971 and 1972 manpower requirements.

The Commanding General, San Diego Recruit Depot, replied that the depot recently had initiated a 5-day processing system. Under this system marginal recruits are identified before they enter training. Marginal recruits who appear to have potential to complete training are assigned to the Special Training Branch for concentrated training in their areas of weakness. Recruits identified as unsalvageable are immediately discharged. By devoting more time to marginal recruits who seem to have potential, the Commanding General hopes to reduce the discharge rate. He advised the Commandant, however, that there would have to be an improvement in the quality of recruits received at the depot, if the 10-percent discharge rate were to be achieved.

The Commanding General, Parris Island Recruit Depot, expressed a similar view regarding the need to improve the quality of recruits sent to that depot for training. He also said that the recycling process was under evaluation to ensure that the depot is not giving up too easily on marginal recruits.

Revised enlistment criteria

On July 10, 1971, the Commandant issued special recruiting instructions that were to be implemented during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1971. These instructions (see app. I) establish criteria for the enlistment of 17-year-olds, new-standards personnel, and high school graduates. The revised instructions represent the first change in enlistment criteria since before the Professionalism Program began.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In our opinion, had Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, provided adequate program guidelines on a timely basis to the depots and recruiting activities and had the depots and recruiting activities properly implemented these guidelines, a large part of the \$15.3 million costs associated with the recruits who enlisted in the corps during the first 10 months of the program and who subsequently received unsuitability discharges might have been avoided.

Although the objective of the Professionalism Program--developing a highly professional corps--is laudable, we believe that the timing and the manner in which recruit enlistment and training aspects of the program were initiated and carried out leave a lot to be desired. A study was not made, before the program began, to determine the best time and manner to carry out the program at recruiting and training activities. Guidelines were not provided to recruiters and training activities describing how they should implement the program, except for those guidelines provided to training activities that limited the amount of remedial training. Consequently, without coordinating their efforts, recruiters and training personnel applied existing standards on a subjective basis. It appears that training personnel applied standards more stringently than recruiters and this has resulted in an abnormally high number of recruits' being enlisted in the corps who have been unable to complete training.

Although the corps has initiated a number of actions to reduce the unsuitability-discharge rate, the rate is still abnormally high. As to those earlier actions whose effect can be evaluated, it appears that they have done little to reduce the rate. As to the more recent actions, it is too early to determine whether they will affect the rate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the Marine Corps' experience with the Professionalism Program, we recommend that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, before initiating similar major programs,

ensure that the necessary advance planning has been carried out. This planning should include coordination among participating groups and the preparation and dissemination to those groups of guidance needed to effectively carry out the programs.

We recommend also that the Commandant have copies of this report made available to all management levels in the corps to illustrate the adverse effects that can result from initiating major programs (1) without effective advance planning and coordination among participating organizations and (2) without providing adequate implementing guidelines to the organizations responsible for carrying out the programs.

Also, if the more recent actions taken by the Marine Corps do not reduce materially the unsuitability-discharge rate, we recommend that the Secretary of the Navy direct the Commandant to:

- Perform an in-depth review of the policies, procedures, and practices employed by corps' recruiting personnel to determine whether such personnel are making acceptable efforts to enlist high-quality recruits.
- Initiate a study to determine whether it would be desirable and practicable to develop means of reducing the amount of subjectivity used by personnel at recruit depots in applying training standards.
- Develop a plan to implement the recommendations made as a result of the above actions.

CHAPTER 6

AGENCY COMMENTS AND GAO EVALUATION

DOD comments on a draft of this report were provided to us by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Financial Management) in a letter dated November 11, 1971. (See app. II.) The Assistant Secretary said that the findings in this report were correct. He stated that our recommendations were concurred with in principle, and he indicated that their intent could be accomplished through normal operating procedures.

Concerning our recommendation that the Commandant of the Marine Corps ensure that the necessary advance planning be performed and adequate implementing guidance be prepared and distributed prior to initiating programs similar to the Professionalism Program, the Assistant Secretary stated that standard Marine Corps procedures routinely include such provisions. He commented that, in the subject case, the fault was one of omission, rather than a failure to recognize such needs. He added that every effort would be exerted to preclude a similar incident in the future.

Further the Assistant Secretary stated that the purpose of the Marine Corps in instituting the Professionalism Program continued to be valid and that it was expected that the corps' current efforts would reduce recruit attrition to an acceptable level by the end of 1971. If these efforts do not produce the required results, the corps intends to re-examine the program in depth.

We believe that the comments of the Assistant Secretary are responsive to our recommendations, and we plan to consider at a later date the effectiveness of the actions taken by the Marine Corps to reduce the recruit unsuitability-discharge rates to an acceptable level.

CHAPTER 7

SCOPE OF REVIEW

In performing this review, we examined into the policies, procedures, and practices used by the Marine Corps for training recruits and for discharging recruits for reasons of unsuitability. We also made limited inquiries concerning enlistment standards and procedures. We obtained enlistment and discharge data from the corps and the other military services. In addition, we interviewed recruiting, training, and management officials at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, and at selected field installations of the corps.

Our work was performed during the period January through April 1971 at the following locations.

Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina

Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California

Marine Corps recruiting activities in the Los Angeles, California, and Atlanta, Georgia, areas.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20380

IN REPLY REFER TO
 DPJ-ars
 10 Jun 1971

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
 To: Director, 1st Marine Corps District
 Director, 4th Marine Corps District
 Director, 6th Marine Corps District
 Director, 8th Marine Corps District
 Director, 9th Marine Corps District
 Director, 12th Marine Corps District

Subj: Special Recruiting Instructions for Fiscal Year 1972

Ref: (a) MCBul 1130 of 6 Jan 1971
 (b) CMC ltr DPJ-ars of 9 Apr 1971
 (c) MCO 5310.2H

Encl: (1) Odds-for-Effectiveness Table

1. Reference (a), which provides recruiting instructions for third and fourth quarters FY 71, is applicable for the first quarter of FY 72, and is therefore extended through September 1971. However, a major revision of enlistment criteria becomes effective on 1 July 1971. Therefore, the following special recruiting instructions are promulgated:

a. The enlistment of all 17 year old applicants is limited to those who have completed high school or an equivalent trade school, or score 50 or better on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (or its ASVAB equivalent).

b. The enlistment of Mental Group IVB (MG IVB)¹ personnel will be limited to those who attain an odds-for-effectiveness score of 50 or better (see enclosure (1)). Also, 65% of the district requirement of MG IVB's must be high school graduates or have completed an equivalent trade school curricula.

c. District directors are requested to establish a goal for recruiters for FY 72 which will ensure the increase in percentage of high school graduates enlisted to 65 percent.

d. District directors are authorized to exceed 2 year enlistment requirements by 20% of total quota (in lieu of 3 or 4 year enlistments) in order to attract high school graduates or equivalent trade school graduates, who attain a 50 or better on the AFQT or ASVAB derived AFQT.

¹GAO note: MG IVB personnel are new-standards personnel.

DPJ-ars
10 Jun 1971

Subj: Special Recruiting Instructions for Fiscal Year 1971

2. Trade schools considered equivalent to high schools are those vocation-oriented secondary schools which have a curricula involving schooling for 3 or 4 years.
3. In view of the FY 71 aviation enlistment shortfall, district directors are encouraged to place added emphasis on that program during the forthcoming year.
4. The criteria established in paragraph 1a through 1d will be published in a forthcoming change to reference (c). In the interim, this letter will serve as special recruiting instructions to be implemented by 1 July 1971.



E. R. REID, Jr.
By direction

Copy to:
CG, MCRDep, PISC
CG, MCRDep, SDiego
CO, MarBks, San Juan
CO, MarBks, Guam
Dir, Recruiters' School

BEST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20350

11 NOV 1971

Mr. Forrest R. Browne
Associate Director
Defense Division
U. S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Browne:

The Secretary of Defense has asked me to reply to your letter of 1 September 1971 on the increase in unsuitability discharges among Marine Corps recruits.

I am enclosing the Navy reply to the report.

Sincerely yours,

FRANK SANDERS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
(FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT)

Encl:

- (1) Department of the Navy Reply to GAO Draft Report of 1 Sep 1971 on Report to the Congress of the United States on Increase in Unsuitability Discharges Among Marine Corps Recruits (OSD Case #3337)

APPENDIX II

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY REPLY
TO
GAO DRAFT REPORT OF SEPTEMBER 1 1971
ON
REPORT TO
THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
INCREASE IN UNSUITABILITY DISCHARGES
AMONG MARINE CORPS RECRUITS
OSD Case No. 3337

Summary of GAO findings and recommendations

During the period December 1969 to September 1970 the Marine Corps discharged about 22% (11,100) of its male recruits for reasons of unsuitability. This rate was five times greater than that experienced in the previous twelve years. The cost of recruiting, training and returning those men to their homes was \$15.3 million.

The GAO concluded that the proximate cause of this increase was the implementation by the Marine Corps of a program of increased professionalism designed to regain pre-Vietnam levels. They believe the rate increased because:

- a. Before the Professionalism Program began, no study was made to determine the best time and manner to carry out the Program at recruiting and training activities, and;
- b. No formal guidance was provided to concerned activities describing how the Program should be implemented.

The report provided the following recommendations:

- a. That prior to implementing similar programs the Marine Corps conduct the necessary prior planning and assure that adequate guidance is provided, and;
- b. Copies of their report be made available to all management levels in the Marine Corps to illustrate the adverse results of initiating programs without the necessary planning and guidance.

It was also recommended that in the event current Marine Corps efforts to reduce the discharge rate do not succeed the following steps be taken:

Enclosure (1)

a. That the Marine Corps conduct an in-depth review of recruiting practices to assure adequate efforts to enlist high quality recruits, and;

b. Initiate a study of training at Recruit Depots to determine the feasibility of reducing the amount of subjectivity in training.

Summary of Department of the Navy position. The findings of the subject report are correct. The recommendations provided are concurred with in principle and their intent can be accommodated by normal internal procedures. The purpose of the Marine Corps in instituting its Professionalism Program continues to be valid. It is expected that current Marine Corps efforts to reduce recruit attrition to an acceptable level will achieve the goal by end 1971.

Department of the Navy Position. The findings of the subject report are correct. The year 1970 saw the Marine Corps returning to its pre-Vietnam force level, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps established the goal of also returning to a force composed only of men of ability, dedication, and capacity for growth. In order to provide a skilled nucleus of highly professional Marines which could accomplish the Marine Corps mission while moving toward a zero draft environment, and be capable of undergoing rapid expansion in a future emergency, increased emphasis was placed on retaining only those personnel of high quality.

The GAO recommends that the Marine Corps conduct necessary advance planning and provide adequate guidance for implementation prior to initiating similar programs. In view of the circumstances of the report such a recommendation must be considered valid. It should be pointed out, however, that standard Marine Corps procedures routinely include such provisions. In the subject case the fault was one of omission rather than a failure to recognize such needs. Every effort will be exerted to preclude a similar incident in the future.

Prior to the receipt of the report, the Marine Corps took several actions to reduce the discharge rate without weakening the standards for completing basic training. It is expected that the actions described below will reduce recruit attrition rates to an acceptable level by the end of 1971.

a. At the recruiting stations, procedures have been introduced to avoid accepting men who do not have a high probability of success. For example, a literacy test is

APPENDIX II

being administered and certain personal characteristics of the applicant are checked against those which research has shown correlate with successful performance in the Marine Corps. These new screening procedures supplement the regular pre-enlistment aptitude tests always given to applicants.

b. Recruit depots have developed new procedures to identify marginal recruits early, so that extra help can be provided to assist the recruit in completing basic training.

c. Finally, the program which appears to hold the greatest potential for success is the recent introduction of higher enlistment standards. Emphasis has been placed on obtaining a higher percentage of men who are high school graduates and who are in the upper mental categories as measured by the Armed Forces Qualification Test. These higher enlistment standards will raise the quality of men sent to recruit training.

If the current measures do not produce the required results, the Marine Corps naturally will reexamine the program in depth, since this subject is of vital concern to the Marine Corps.

BEST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF
ACTIVITIES DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT

	<u>Tenure of office</u>	
	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
<u>DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE</u>		
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE:		
Melvin R. Laird	Jan. 1969	Present
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS):		
Roger T. Kelly	Mar. 1969	Present
<u>DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY</u>		
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY:		
John H. Chafee	Jan. 1969	Present
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS):		
James E. Johnson	Apr. 1971	Present
James D. Hittle	Feb. 1969	Mar. 1971
COMMANDANT, U.S. MARINE CORPS:		
General Robert E. Cushman, Jr.	Dec. 1971	Present
General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr.	Feb. 1968	Dec. 1971

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